



Statement from the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, 1 September 2023

UPCOMING VOICE REFERENDUM

We, the members of the Aboriginal nations, through the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, hereby assert absolute sovereignty and territorial integrity over our ancestral lands, and assert our right to self-determination.

The Aboriginal Tent Embassy was established in 1972. For its most recent 30 years, the Embassy has stood permanently. During its total 51 years, the Embassy has run in accordance with Aboriginal cultural protocols. These cultural protocols are an active continuance of the oldest legal systems in the world.

Part of those ancient protocols means the Embassy is not an exclusive, invitation-only club; but a place where all mob are welcome like a big Aboriginal family.

Part of those ancient protocols also determine when it is, and when it is not appropriate to make representations on behalf of a group of people.

The Embassy has stood firm over its time. Land Rights, Sovereignty and Reparatory Justice have been its core issues.

1. Land Rights - not Land Lease.
2. Sovereignty - no integration and assimilation.
3. Reparatory Justice – not charity, rent seeking or cheap measures.

The Referendum Council Process

The process that led to the Uluru Statement was colonially-funded and ultimately controlled by the Referendum Council. This is problematic for several reasons.

Firstly, the process was not conducted in accordance with Aboriginal decision-making processes commensurate with the serious long-term implications of the decisions made. Most Aboriginal people and groups were left out of key decision-making due to the invitation-only nature of the process.

Secondly, it is a clear conflict of interest for the colonial power to constrain the agenda on how we decolonise. This was not a free determination. There was no process arbitrator.

Thirdly, the options that Aboriginal people have for self-determination as colonised peoples are much wider than the narrow and tightly-controlled agenda of the Referendum Council process. Delegates reported the process was so highly controlled that they have concerns the outcome was predetermined.

Embassy position on the Referendum

In response to the Uluru Statement, a referendum has now been called to modify the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act (the Constitution). The Constitution was enacted under the authority of the colonial Crown and its agents. It can only be changed by the occupiers, under rules which the colonial Crown and agents have enacted.

As such, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy takes no position on this referendum with regards to 'yes' or 'no'. The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act has never been part of our law.

Due to the ways referendums are run and due to demographic factors, our people don't have a realistic chance to influence the Referendum outcome. Disproportionately, many of our people are in prison or are too young to vote. Furthermore, it may be the case that our people do not have a right to vote in this referendum as we vote only at the discretion of the States.

Call to Action

Irrespective of position on the upcoming referendum, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy regards the planned implementation of the Uluru Statement and the Declaration of Recognition as a threat to our peoples' exercise of the right to self-determination under UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 ('Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples') as it does not have due regard to the freely expressed will of the peoples concerned.

Our peoples desire to decolonise and come to an acceptable and fair solution. But it needs to happen through a properly resourced process conducted under our own ancient protocols.

The force of colonial States depriving our people of our right to self-determination is evidenced by the failure to 'close the gap'. **The Aboriginal Embassy formally and openly seeks assistance from United Nations member States** in the form of separate action with respect to UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) and the UN General Assembly Resolution 2625 ('Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations'). The purpose of this request is to enable our people to freely exercise their right to self-determination, under our own decision-making processes and without external interference.

The Aboriginal Embassy also seeks mob from all over to come together, so we can put all the options on the table and find a path to decolonise under our own terms, and not under terms dictated to us.